

Washington -- Congresswoman Linda Sánchez today attended a House Judiciary Committee hearing on the Justice Department Inspector General and Office of Professional Responsibility's recently released report on the U.S. Attorney firing controversy. Congresswoman Sánchez is the Chair of the Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Commercial and Administrative Law (CAL), which initiated oversight efforts, ultimately prompting the Justice Department investigation.

"It is crystal clear that blind partisanship and blind leaders tried to strangle a tradition of blind justice," Rep. Sánchez said. "This report shows political considerations were an important factor in the removal of several of the fired U.S. Attorneys."

The Inspector General and the Office of Professional Responsibility issued their 358-page report on Monday.

"We started the investigation into the firings of nine U.S. Attorneys because of the troubling prospect that partisan politics had contaminated our system of justice," Rep. Sánchez said. "Mounting evidence now suggests there may also have been criminal conduct by the Department's senior leadership."

The report recommends that the Attorney General appoint a special prosecutor to work with IG/OPR to conduct further investigations, and ultimately determine whether the evidence demonstrates that any criminal offense was committed with regard to the U.S. Attorney firings or the testimony of any witness related to the U.S. Attorney firings.

However, Attorney General Michael Mukasey appointed Nora Dannehy, the Acting U.S. Attorney in Connecticut, as the Acting U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia, rather than seeking to appoint someone outside of the government to serve as a Special Counsel.

"Appointing Ms. Dannehy as an Acting U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia could indicate that the President or the Attorney General plan to cut this investigation off at the knees," Rep. Sánchez said. "I am deeply concerned that Ms. Dannehy's lack of independence from the executive branch individuals she is investigating could lead to her quietly getting overruled when trying to subpoena Karl Rove, Harriet Miers, and others at the White House responsible for the improper politically-motivated firings."